



Naval Education and
Training Command

NAVEDTRA 12604
November 1995
0502-LP-479-7600

Training Manual
(TRAMAN)

Personnelman 3 & 2

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

The public may request copies of this document by following
the purchasing instruction on the inside cover.

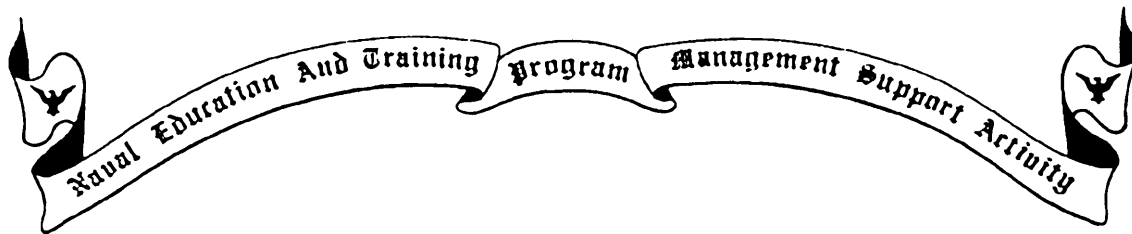


0502LP4797600

Although the words “he,” “him,” and “his” are used sparingly in this manual to enhance communication, they are not intended to be gender driven nor to affront or discriminate against anyone reading this material.

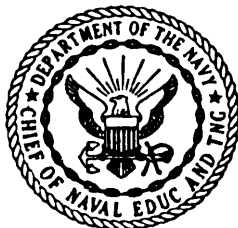
DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

The public may request copies of this document by writing to Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402-0001 or to the Naval Inventory Control Point (NICP) - Cog “I” Material, Attention Cash Sales, 700 Robbins Avenue, Philadelphia PA 19111-5098.



PERSONNELMAN 3 & 2

NAVEDTRA 12604



*1995 Edition Prepared by
PNCS(AW/SW) Hector M. Escajeda
PNCM Dennis L. Schulenberg*



PREFACE

This training manual (TRAMAN) and the associated nonresident training course (NRTC) form an individual study package for enlisted personnel of both the Regular Navy and Naval Reserve who are studying for advancement for Personnelman Third and Second Class. As indicated by the title, the TRAMAN is based on the occupational standards for the rates of PN3 and PN2, as stated in the *Navy Enlisted Manpower and Personnel Classification and Occupational Standards*, NAVPERS 18068.

The subject areas contained herein are: dynamics of the Personnelman rating Navy enlisted occupations; personnel support; correspondence and files; enlisted service records; officer service records; enlisted distribution and verification report (EDVR), officer distribution and control report (ODCR), and diary message reporting system (DMRS); counseling service members; advancement, education, and training; commissioning programs; overseas travel and orders; transfers and receipts; naval reserve program, reenlistment incentive programs, and separations; leave procedures; electronic data processing, and source data system.

The associated NRTC for the TRAMAN provides the usual way of satisfying the requirement for completing the TRAMAN and one of the requirements for advancement exam participation.

The Personnelman 3&2 TRAMAN and separate NRTC were prepared by the Naval Education and Training Program Management Support Activity, Pensacola, Florida, for the Chief of Naval Education and Training. Technical assistance was provided by the following personnel: PNCM Carlito B. Paguio and PNCM Gerald G. Sepka both from the Naval Education and Training Management Support Activity, Pensacola, Florida.

SCOPE OF THIS REVISION

In this revision, we split the officer and enlisted service records chapter, and discuss each one separately in chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 8 has been added addressing counseling service members; chapter 9 has more in-depth information on advancement, education, and training. Chapter 11 on overseas travel has been added.

1995 Edition

**Stock Ordering No.
0502-LP-479-7600**

Published by
NAVAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
PROGRAM MANAGEMENT SUPPORT ACTIVITY

UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.: 1995

THE UNITED STATES NAVY

GUARDIAN OF OUR COUNTRY

The United States Navy is responsible for maintaining control of the sea and is a ready force on watch at home and overseas, capable of strong action to preserve the peace or of instant offensive action to win in war.

It is upon the maintenance of this control that our country's glorious future depends; the United States Navy exists to make it so.

WE SERVE WITH HONOR

Tradition, valor, and victory are the Navy's heritage from the past. To these may be added dedication, discipline, and vigilance as the watchwords of the present and the future.

At home or on distant stations we serve with pride, confident in the respect of our country, our shipmates, and our families.

Our responsibilities sober us; our adversities strengthen us.

Service to God and Country is our special privilege. We serve with honor.

THE FUTURE OF THE NAVY

The Navy will always employ new weapons, new techniques, and greater power to protect and defend the United States on the sea, under the sea, and in the air.

Now and in the future, control of the sea gives the United States her greatest advantage for the maintenance of peace and for victory in war.

Mobility, surprise, dispersal, and offensive power are the keynotes of the new Navy. The roots of the Navy lie in a strong belief in the future, in continued dedication to our tasks, and in reflection on our heritage from the past.

Never have our opportunities and our responsibilities been greater.

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. Dynamics of the Personnelman Rating	1-1
2. Navy Enlisted Occupations	2-1
3. Personnel Support	3-1
4. Correspondence and Files	4-1
5. Enlisted Service Records	5-1
6. Officer Service Records	6-1
7. Enlisted Distribution and.. Verification Report, Officer Distribution Control Report, and Diary Message Reporting System	7-1
8. Counseling Service Members..	8-1
9. Advancement, Education, and Training	9-1
10. Commissioning Programs	10-1
11. Overseas Travel and Orders	11-1
12. Transfers and Receipts	12-1
13. Naval Reserve Programs, Reenlistment Incentive Programs and Separations	13-1
14. Leave Procedures	14-1
15. Electronic Data Processing and Source Data System	15-1
APPENDIX	
I. Glossary	AI-1
II. References Used to Develop the TRAMAN	AII-1
INDEX	INDEX-1

CHAPTER 1

DYNAMICS OF THE PERSONNELMAN RATING

The Navy Personnelman (PN), as the name implies, is someone who works in a personnel-related field and is normally assigned to a personnel office. In today's Navy, the PN carries out a broad range of duties, including typing and recordkeeping, interviewing and counseling, writing official letters and reports, and maintaining the officer and enlisted service records. These are fundamental responsibilities in the PN rating, but they are not the only ones assigned to PNs. In fact, this rating is so broad that there are many responsibilities we will not be able to cover within the scope of this training manual (TRAMAN).

SCOPE OF THIS TRAMAN

In this TRAMAN, we will focus our attention on the important duties and responsibilities that are most frequently assigned to PNs in paygrades E-4 and E-5. We will concentrate on the duties performed and the knowledge required by the Personnelman third class and second class based on the most current Navy enlisted occupational standards.

HOW TO USE THIS TRAMAN

Remember, you cannot rely solely on the information presented in this TRAMAN to accomplish your job as a PN. Remember also that the scope of the information provided in this manual is basic information you should know as you grow and progress in the PN field.

Throughout this TRAMAN, you will encounter specific terminology associated with the PN rating. As a study aid, the glossary in the back provides explanations that may help you better understand what you are reading. Use this glossary whenever you have questions concerning certain terms and/or acronyms that you may not understand.

As you read the information, keep in mind that you are responsible for keeping yourself up to date in all areas of your rating and career. At the time it was printed, this TRAMAN contained current information. However, by the time you obtain this self-study TRAMAN/NRTC training package and begin to use it, some of this information will be superseded by

newer information. We advise you to keep an open mind and stay alert as to whether or not the information is the most up-to-date information you should use according to the most current official policies and practices of your rating and the Navy.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RATING

Your duties and responsibilities will involve dealing with people and maintaining the records that represent their lives. Among all the duties and responsibilities you may encounter as a member of the PN rating, one stands out as the most important—you must be able to work and deal with people. Recordkeeping will also be an important part of your job. The importance of accurate recordkeeping throughout the Navy cannot be overemphasized. From the standpoint of the Navy, records provide a ready reference source to past events and policies and help in making future decisions. For the individual, records provide a source of reference to past accomplishments, awards, training, performance, and other important information relative to his or her naval career. Remember, a Navy member's service record represents his or her life.

As a PN, you are entrusted by the Navy to take care of its most valuable asset—its people. As you read this chapter, you may notice that most of the information will focus on your responsibility to provide good customer service to Navy people. Understanding the significance of providing good customer service is fundamental to your rating and is the most important step you can take to become a better PN. After studying the information in this chapter, you should be able to recognize the important transactions that take place in a Navy personnel office. You also should be able to identify the fundamentals of good customer service and the ways in which you, the PN, can provide the best service to the Navy's people.

THE PERSONNEL OFFICE

In many ways, the personnel office is an administrative control center within a command. Numerous pay and personnel actions that directly impact on naval personnel are performed out of this

office. For example, when a service member gets married, he or she must go to the personnel office to initiate all the necessary paper work on behalf of the new dependent. Leave papers are processed in this office. Dependent and active duty ID card applications and cards are also prepared. Furthermore, members who are reporting aboard, transferring, reenlisting, or separating from the Navy will have the appropriate documents prepared at the personnel office. The transactions that take place in the personnel office will affect nearly all areas of a Navy member's life.

The size and composition of personnel offices will vary from command to command and from ship to ship. A common characteristic of all personnel offices is that they are usually very active because of the numerous personnel transactions that continually take place. At sea, PNs will work in the personnel or ship's office. If attached to a squadron, PNs will work out of an office assigned to them by the ship's commanding officer (CO). This office is independent of the personnel and/or the ship's administrative offices. Ashore, PNs are normally assigned to personnel support activity detachments (PERSUPPDETS). The following section will give you an overview of the PERSUPPDETS.

PERSONNEL SUPPORT ACTIVITY DETACHMENTS

The PERSUPPDETS, also referred to as PSDs, are the one-stop service centers that retain and maintain the pay accounts and service records for all shore commands and activities within a specific geographical area. All active duty Navy personnel, including transients, students, and patients attached to shore activities and components, Naval Reserve activities, and joint and unified commands within a prescribed geographical area, are supported by that area's PERSUPPDETS. Figures 1-1 and 1-2 show PNs providing customer service to Navy personnel at a PERSUPPDET.

All PERSUPPDETS are supported by a personnel support activity (PSA). The PSAs are activities that manage a number of PERSUPPDETS within a geographical area. As the command in charge of these PERSUPPDETS, the PSA provides technical direction, guidance, and assistance to all commands under its authority.

The overall mission or goal of the PERSUPPDETS is to provide pay and personnel services to officer and enlisted naval personnel and passenger transportation services to all Navy-sponsored travelers; to provide commands and activities with pay, personnel, and



Figure 1-1.—PN assisting customers at a PERSUPPDET.



Figure 1-2.—Customer service area in a PERSUPPDET.

transportation management information and other related support; and to perform such other functions and tasks as directed by the PSA.

To carry out their mission, the PERSUPPDETS perform the following functions:

- Provide one-stop pay, administrative, and passenger transportation support to the individual service member, dependents, and retirees, and passenger transportation support to Navy civilians
- Provide military pay support to naval activities and/or afloat units without a disbursing officer and provide other disbursing services as applicable
- Provide pay, personnel, and transportation management information to customer commands to assist them in the effective management of personnel assigned
- Ensure the accuracy and timeliness of submission of pay, personnel, and passenger transportation data to the Bureau of Naval Personnel (BUPERS); Defense Finance and Accounting Service

(DFAS)-Cleveland Center, Cleveland, Ohio; Naval Reserve Center (NAVRESCEN); and other commands as appropriate.

Essentially, these functions will touch upon the lives of all Navy personnel assigned to shore commands and activities. In the following section, let's look at a personnel office afloat.

SHIPBOARD PERSONNEL OFFICES

Let us briefly consider the makeup of shipboard personnel offices. At sea, these offices are obviously much smaller than offices ashore. When feasible, personnel offices will be located near the disbursing office. On aircraft carriers, the personnel office and the disbursing office may be combined to maximize their effectiveness. The nearness or the combination of both offices is due to the close working relationship between the PNs and the Disbursing Clerks (DKs) and the continual interchanging of information regarding personnel and pay accounts. This closeness or combination of off-ices also helps enable a more timely submission of pay documents from personnel to disbursing.

On smaller ships, most administrative and personnel functions are likely to be performed out of a single office. On larger ships, such as aircraft carriers, these duties may be carried out in several different spaces. For example, a large aircraft carrier may have a separate personnel office, an educational services office, an administrative office, and a legal office. As stated earlier, the size and composition of a personnel office will vary from one command to another and also from ship to ship.

Whether you are assigned to a personnel office afloat or ashore, you will have specific responsibilities for the appearance and efficiency of your office. In the following paragraphs, we will examine these responsibilities.

OFFICE APPEARANCE AND ARRANGEMENT

The amount of control you will have over the physical conditions in your office will vary with the location and the type of duty to which you are assigned. Aboard ship and ashore, conditions outside your control may determine the kind of office and equipment you will have. However, regardless of the conditions, you will be expected to take your share of the responsibility for the general appearance and neatness of your office. We will discuss more about the appearance of your office in the next paragraph and in the section pertaining to customer service. We want to point out your responsibilities for your office and how you should perform these duties as a routine part of your job—and not wait to be asked by your supervisor or other senior petty officers to perform them. Take the initiative yourself and carry out these duties!

NEATNESS AND CLEANLINESS

The general appearance of an office can be greatly affected by a simple practice such as putting things away from day to day. It will be one of your responsibilities to see that articles used during the day are put back where they belong. In securing your ship's personnel office for the night, you should properly secure and store all gear and supplies to prevent damage to equipment or injuries to personnel from flying objects if your ship should encounter heavy weather. If you are serving ashore, it is no different—you should still put away articles and clean up your work area before you secure for the day.

Whether your office is ashore or afloat, you should go through your correspondence basket daily to see that work does not pile up. When you handle classified documents, be especially careful. After using classified documents, make sure you store them according to the guidelines set forth in the *Department of the Navy Information and Personnel Security Program Regulation*, OPNAVINST 5510.1.

Make sure all supplies such as ink and correction fluid that may stain other materials are put away properly. Do not leave any equipment on the deck that might be damaged when the office is cleaned. Avoid accumulations of loose papers or other objects that may create a fire hazard. Desks should be dusted frequently. Do not allow dirt to build up until field day.

In putting away things others have been using or in dusting someone else's desk, use care and good judgment so that you do not lose or misplace anything. Do not disturb the arrangements they have made of their papers.

ARRANGING YOUR DESK

Your own desk is one item for which you are always responsible. Arrange it in a manner that is neat and organized. Set the example for those individuals who are less organized than yourself.

The following suggested plan is suitable if you spend most of your time typing letters or other correspondence and forms. Your work may require that you provide space for other types of supplies, but the general principle will still be applicable.

- Keep pencils, erasers, paper clips, and other small articles in shallow drawers or trays.
- Insert slanted stationery trays in one of the upper drawers. Use a separate tray for each type of stationery or form. Place the most frequently used stationery or forms at the front, with the additional trays similarly containing forms according to frequency of usage.
- Keep carbon paper in its box to keep it from curling or from soiling the stationery.
- If you keep any personal belongings such as clothes in your desk, place them in a separate drawer or in a location away from public view.
- At the end of the day, clear everything possible from the top of your desk. You should straighten any articles that remain on top of your desk and close all drawers. Make sure all classified or sensitive material is properly stored.

OFFICE ARRANGEMENT

If you have an opportunity to arrange the furniture in your office, do some advance thinking and planning before you start moving it. You should place desks so that those who work at them will have enough light without having to face the light. Avoid arranging desks so that anyone's back is to the reception area. Everyone in the office should be in a position to see and assist customers. Also make sure there is enough working space for your office co-workers to move around.

Chairs should be adjusted so that typists' feet rest firmly on the floor and chair seats are at least 12 inches below the base of the typewriters. Think of the work that has to go on regularly and place equipment where it can be used most conveniently and where work will flow in one direction rather than in a crisscross manner.

You should place tables or counters conveniently for handling supplies or assembling papers. You should place files where they are handy for those who use them, but separated as much as possible from general office traffic.

Arrange for as much privacy as possible for those who do interviewing and counseling. We will discuss more about counseling techniques in a later chapter. If testing is to be done, provide a quiet spot. If interviewing and testing of large numbers are functions of your office, special interviewing booths and testing rooms will be needed.

It should be possible to plan an arrangement that not only is convenient but also looks orderly and uncluttered. Keep things as simple as possible. Bookcases and special shelves should be used to store books, magazines, and pamphlets so that tables and desks can be used as work spaces and not as receptacles for piles of reading materials. Arrange furniture in a manner that satisfies the needs of your office and is consistent with the availability of space whether you are aboard ship or ashore.

CUSTOMER SERVICE: THE ART OF DEALING WITH PEOPLE

At the beginning of this chapter, we told you that the most important characteristic of a good PN is the ability to work and deal with people. As a PN, almost everything you do will involve dealing with people. In this section, we will tell you about the importance of providing good customer service to all individuals regardless of their status. We will describe what can happen whenever you provide good (or bad) customer

service and the effects you will have on the image of your office, your rating, your command, and the Navy as a whole.

As a PN, you are one of the most important customer service representatives in the Navy. We will tell you about some of the ways in which you, the PN, can improve the customer service environment of your office so that your personnel office can effectively provide the type of customer service Navy people need and deserve. We will talk about your role as a customer service representative and the ways in which your attitude, personal appearance, and pride in your job and yourself play a big part in providing good customer service. We will also tell you about some of the pitfalls you must avoid so you can provide the type of service that your customers will need and deserve.

EFFECTS OF FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT

As a customer, have you ever waited in line only to be told when you finally reach the window, "Come back tomorrow. The person who takes care of that is not here today"? Have you ever tried to get a question answered and had the feeling that the person to whom you were talking resented being bothered? What about this situation: Have you ever walked into an office and waited and waited for service? Did you feel as though you were being ignored by office personnel who were just standing around? Did you notice that some of them realized that you were standing there waiting for service, but just looked the other way? Most importantly, have you ever acted toward a customer in an inappropriate manner, a manner that is not consistent with your professional responsibilities as a PN?

As you think about these questions, are you convinced that there were some good reasons (not excuses) for these situations to happen?

Only a wishful dreamer would expect all the Navy members to be 100 percent dedicated to their work, and only a confirmed pessimist would declare that the Navy will never be as good as it should be. There must be a point between these two extremes at which the problems and requests of naval personnel, their dependents, and Navy employees can be and should be handled correctly, promptly, and courteously; a point at which members will be satisfied with the service they receive without reducing the efficiency of those providing the service.

Providing excellent customer service is the responsibility of everyone in the Navy. A few of the

Navy's ratings, however, are involved primarily with providing services directly to personnel. These ratings include the AK, DK, DT, HM, LI, LN, MS, NC, PC, PN, RP, SH, SK, and YN. Although this chapter is intended for you, the PN, personnel in other ratings who are reading this TRAMAN can apply the same principles of providing good customer service while performing their jobs.

Think back to some recent contact you have had with one or more of the personnel service ratings. How would you rate the service you received? You are a member of one of these ratings. How do you think your service as a PN would be rated by those you have served?

Now, carry this one more step. What effect did this good or bad customer service from other people have on you? How would you respond to courteous treatment and efficient action as opposed to a "don't care" attitude?

YOUR ROLE IN THE PERSONNEL OFFICE

A customer seeking assistance in the personnel office can still be given good service even though it may be impossible for you to provide the desired results. People may ask for things or services to which they are not entitled or for which you may not have the authority to approve or grant. In these cases, providing good customer service refers to the quality of service you can provide rather than whether or not you are able to comply with all the person's wishes. When a person seeks assistance in the personnel office and you do not provide it or you give the person the "runaround," "fast shuffle," or a "Don't bother me" response, you are relaying to this person any one of the following impressions about your attitude concerning his or her needs:

"You are not an important individual."

"Your request or problem is not important to me."

"You don't know what you are talking about; I do !"

"I don't care about your problems; I've got problems of my own."

"I have more important things to do."

"I am having a bad day today."

As a PN assigned to a personnel office, think about the kind of effect you will have on this person who is, after all, just asking for assistance. Many of the people entering the Navy do not have a clear idea of what Navy life is all about. Their perceptions have been

influenced by friends, parents, movies, books, and TV programs; a sense of responsibility to their country (patriotism); the glamour of the uniform and tradition; the opportunity to travel; and the desire to make it on their own. They have all been screened and generally are the type of people the Navy wants—intelligent, healthy, and motivated. They have a lot to learn and still have much hard work and usually some growing up to do. But they have a high potential for becoming valuable Navy members who will value their roles and status in the Navy and the contributions they can make to the Navy and their country.

What happens along the way to make some Navy members count the days until they will get out? Granted, some people will never like the Navy, regardless of the changes made for their benefit. Thus, there are a large number of members who each year bid the Navy farewell. On the other hand, some of these members might have chosen the Navy as a career had it not been for the frustrations and disappointments they encountered during their first enlistment. Everyone has inconveniences and disappointments to contend with, and young sailors are not exempt from these experiences. Nevertheless, young sailors do not expect and should not have to contend with a lack of service. The same is true for all other customers.

The effect of bad service in a personnel office is much more lasting than the momentary anger or disgust felt by the recipient. You can be sure the customer will remember you if you provided him or her with bad service. You can also be sure the customer will tell his or her friends about the bad service you provided. The frustration and resentment bad service can cause will stay with that person in the form of his or her general attitude toward the Navy.

On the other hand, good service contributes to a good attitude in a person. A person who provides good customer service has qualitative and enviable personal characteristics that are indicative of that person's human relations capabilities, knowledge, interest, and concern for others. These qualities are especially important for you, the PN. By providing good service, you make friends, and you build excellent rapport between you and the customer. The Navy person who receives good service will remember you as being a professional customer service representative who is always willing and able to help. You can be sure this person will tell his or her friends about you and recommend you to them whenever they need to come to the personnel office.

In your career, the importance of providing excellent service to Navy people cannot be overstated. You should always strive to provide the best customer

service possible to Navy members, regardless of their status. Also, regardless of the status of your customer, you must always be professional.

Polishing Your Image

To be a good PN, you must look, feel, and act professional. The Navy is affected, either directly or indirectly, by the image you project. The satisfaction and gratitude resulting from a person's having received good customer service will extend beyond you, the PN, because the image you project will also extend to your command and the Navy as a whole. Therefore, the Navy benefits from the good image you have fostered.

The Navy also bears the brunt of a bad image or bad service on your part. Bad service creates an attitude of resentment in the customer toward the personnel office, the command, and the Navy. Machinery and equipment can be purchased when needed, but conscientious, dedicated people cannot. Thus, it is apparent that capable people are the Navy's most valuable asset. The Navy is constantly losing its important assets—its capable petty officers. The choice either to reenlist or leave the Navy is a personal matter, and the decision usually represents much careful thought and planning. Too often, however, the decision to leave the Navy is made by members who have been frustrated by irritating incidents and dissatisfied with the service they have received. In such cases, the Navy has lost not only the person but also, in many cases, a considerable training investment.

As a PN, you may ask, "What can I do about it?" My job can't be all that important!" Remember: When you are performing a personal service or supplying a personal need, there are no unimportant jobs! One of these days when you leave your ship or the PER-SUPPDET where you work, look back at the place and say to yourself, "My job is very important. I am a significant contributor toward the overall mission of my command. I will continue to do my very best." Remember: you are an important individual! Your image should reflect your pride in your job and yourself.

Improving Service

Few changes are made just for the sake of change. There is first a recognized need, and then new procedures are developed to meet the need. This is also the first step in making improvements in the area of service. Those involved must recognize that, in all instances, the best possible service has not been provided. Regardless of how well things maybe working, there is usually room for improvement.

Recognizing the Customer's Needs

Before discussing needs, let's first consider the people who experience them. Everyone in the Navy has needs. People's problems must be often met by someone else. As a PN, you will encounter many individuals who have a variety of needs. You most likely will know the answers to many of the problems or, if not, you will know where to find them. As depicted in figure 1-3, you have the key to the

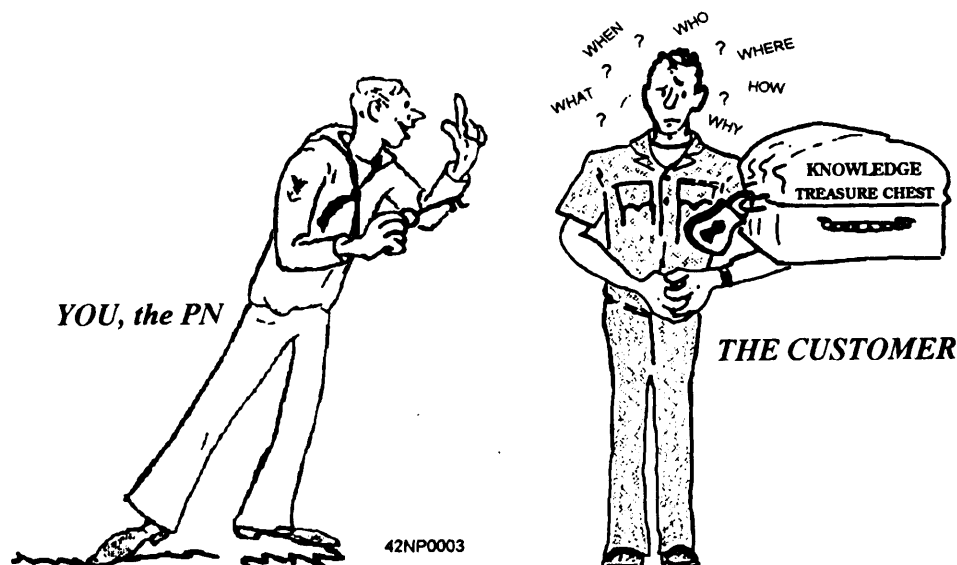


Figure 1-3.—You hold the key to the treasure chest of knowledge for good customer service.

information chest that contains the facts you need to help a person seeking assistance. Recognize that the personal service requirements are not the same for everyone. The senior petty officer will come to you for service, but, because of his or her experience, will not require the same explanations, interpretations, or advice that a younger, less experienced member requires. Since the more experienced members are aware of the services to which they are entitled, they are less likely to accept poor service. Although all members depend on others for service, the greater need probably is felt by the young men and women serving their first enlistment, or by their dependents.

It is apparent from members' comments concerning the service provided by some personnel in customer service-related fields that the service needs to improve. As a first step in determining how improvements can be made, let's analyze the following factors concerning the desires and feelings of our customers:

- They want to be regarded as individuals.
- They feel that, as persons, they are worthy of more attention than you would give to mechanical, routine duties.
- They want you to treat them equally and fairly, to be concerned with their welfare, and to be considerate of their time.
- They recognize their lack of experience and knowledge and rely on more experienced members, such as yourself, for advice and proper action in their behalf.

These examples all relay one message: Improved human relations are essential if customer service is to improve.

Improving Your Contact Skills

To have a skill is the ability to do something well as the result of talent, training, or practice, or a combination of these. A multitude of skills comes into play in your day-to-day life—the professional skills of your rating, your military skills, and the skills you use in your off-duty activities.

We are concerned here with yet another type of skill, face-to-face skills. These are skills that enable you to deal effectively with people. Basically, these skills include the ability to listen attentively,

effectively use eye contact, and work with and speak to every individual as a person and not as an object.

The structure of the Navy tends to foster an impersonal attitude in its members. We go where we are sent. We do what we are told. Most of the decisions that affect our lives are made by people we never even see. This type of relationship does not involve face-to-face contact, but this is not the relationship that exists aboard ships or at shore stations. Here you are in face-to-face contact with the customer; here the relationship becomes personal.

It is because of this personal interaction that you are required to have face-to-face skills if you are to be an effective PN. People who are successful in sales prefer to work on commission because it provides a reward in proportion to their skills and efforts—the most important being their face-to-face skills. They listen to the customer to understand his or her needs; they speak to the customer in a way the customer understands; and they make every effort to make sure the customer is satisfied.

Your effectiveness as the contact point depends on how well you listen, speak, and respond to the customer's needs and how well you acquire and use face-to-face skills.

Examining Your Attitudes

Attitudes can be described as the tendency to move toward a situation or away from it; to be either positive or negative in our outlook or feelings toward a subject; or to express a like or dislike (based on habit, a previously formed opinion, or a current snap judgment) for someone or something. A good illustration of the positive-negative outlook was provided sometime ago by a television commercial for the U.S. Peace Corps. Look at the glass in figure 1-4. Do you see the filled portion or the empty portion of the glass? Do you see "what is" and resolve to make the most of it? Or, do you see and resent "what is not"?

Our attitudes cannot be measured or graded, but the effects or results of our attitudes can be. The effects of our attitudes are apparent in our actions, words, and deeds. You may have said or heard someone else say, "That person has a bad attitude." What does this mean? How was this opinion formed? Was it formed as the result of the way that person has acted toward co-workers or customers, or as a result of not having completed his or her assigned work?

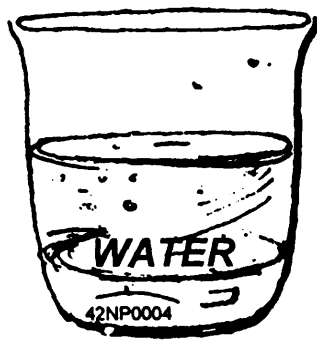


Figure 1-4.—Is the glass half empty or half full?

Let's look at some specific instances in which attitude can play a big part. Consider the situation of PN2 Boat who works in the educational services office aboard a carrier. PN2 Boat knows that PN3 Doe, who works in the personnel office and is in charge of the leave tickler, submitted canceled leave papers to the disbursing office without authorization. PN2 Boat also knows that PN3 Doe informed the DKs that the leave that was supposed to have been taken by those members was not taken, and that they should not charge these members. Contrary to what PN3 Doe told the disbursing office, PN2 Boat knows that the leave was actually taken by these members. What if PN2 Boat should say to himself "Oh well, PN3 Doe does not work for me; he is the personnel office supervisor's responsibility. Anyway, I'm short and really shouldn't care about what happens in the personnel office." What will happen as a result of PN2 Boat's attitude? First of all, the individuals who should be charged for the leave they took will not get charged, and no disciplinary action will be brought against PN3 Doe. Do you think this is dereliction of duty on the part of PN2 Boat? We think so.

Let's consider the attitude that prompted PN2 Boat not to take action. It is the same attitude demonstrated by the Mess Management Specialist (MS) who scorches the eggs; the liberty boat coxswain who drives into every wave to create lots of spray; or the Hospital Corpsman (HM) who loses your shot record. PN2 Boat did not care because he had a short-timer's attitude and was a good friend of one of the members who was supposed to have been charged leave. Also, he did not care because he was not PN3 Doe's supervisor. As for the MS, he had already eaten. In the case of the liberty boat coxswain, he was in this duty section and was going no farther than fleet landing. As for the HM, he would not end up with a sore arm from the extra shots you might have to take. These

individuals were not interested in doing a good job. They were just going through the mechanics of doing a job but not taking the responsibility for doing it well.

Why are we bothering to talk about attitudes? After all, people are people, and you cannot change human nature. This is not true! Human nature is constantly changing—as attitudes change. How do attitudes change? First, it takes you to recognize that a need for change in attitude is desirable. Second, you have to do something about it or take appropriate action to make the change. Only you can do it. No other person can force you to change. Changing your attitude is just like setting goals for yourself; you must combine vision with action. It is just like wanting to do something, determining what needs to be done, and doing it.

No doubt you have seen a child being carried kicking and screaming into a doctor's office for a shot. The child's negative attitude is based on fear of the immediate discomfort of getting a shot. Why do adults go for their shots without kicking and screaming? An adult's positive attitude is based on the knowledge that the immediate discomfort of a shot is insignificant compared to the desirability of preventing disease. As we increase our knowledge and understanding, our outlook on life—our attitude—becomes more positive. As a PN, you can be sure your attitude will have an effect on your ability to deal with your customers.

ROLE OF THE CUSTOMER

Before we talk about the role of the customer, let's first consider the term *customer*. It is a familiar word, and all of us in the Navy are frequently considered to be customers. We often go to other offices for assistance. As customers, we always expect to be provided the very best possible service. In reality, we do not always receive the kind of service we deserve or expect from those serving behind the counter.

Your role as a customer is to be courteous, tactful, and respectful to the person providing assistance to you. When you make the person assisting you feel important, you are encouraging that person to be more aware of the expected service he or she needs to provide. If you feel that the person is not providing you with the assistance you seek or expect, it is your responsibility to bring the matter to the attention of a more senior and knowledgeable individual, such as the person's supervisor. As the customer, you should never leave an office unsatisfied. You should leave

that office feeling that you can always return, at any time, and be confident that they will provide you with the assistance you need. This is a realistic expectation.

Now, change your position from the person seeking assistance to the person behind the counter providing assistance. Just imagine how customers feel when they come to the personnel office and they do not receive the help they need or deserve. Look at figure 1-5. How would you feel if you were the person being served by an actual PN who acted just like the PN shown in this figure? It is not a good feeling, is it? Remember one thing, always put yourself in the customer's shoes. Think of how you, as a customer, would like to be treated. If you remember this, you will become a more conscientious PN and you will certainly try to provide the very best customer service possible. Take care of those who need help. If you do not have the answers, find out who does, and get the answers.

THE CUSTOMER'S FIRST IMPRESSION

Customers form first impressions about you and your office the very first time they come in for help. Therefore, it is important for you to create a positive, lasting impression. You may handle many customers

in the course of a day. Remember that every customer deserves the same courteous treatment. Take care of each customer in a professional manner and move on to the next one. The fact that you must handle many customers during the course of a day may affect your mood. If you are in a bad mood, the customer will sense it and feel very uncomfortable around you. Therefore, you should learn to control your moods and your temper.

If you feel that you cannot provide the service a customer needs because you are having a bad day, get someone else who will be able to help, and excuse yourself. This is in the best interest of you and the customer.

A customer's impression of you will usually extend to the entire office. For example, if a customer has a particularly complicated problem, and you are able to help him or her solve it by looking up the applicable reference, the comment from the customer to shipmates might be, "That PN3 John Doe in the personnel office is on the ball." It is even more likely that the customer's comment will be, "That personnel office is on the ball. They solved my problem because they know what they are doing."



Figure 1-5.—Impolite behavior results in bad customer service.

Your Appearance

Just like your image, your appearance is the first thing the customer notices and uses to form an impression. You must look good, feel good, and act professional. You also should exhibit self-confidence in your abilities.

It goes without saying that you should be in the prescribed uniform of the day. But this by itself is not enough. You should present not only a correct but also a neat appearance. Of course, no one is expected to look neat and fresh at the end of a hard day. For example, if you are told to paint a passageway in front of the personnel office aboard the ship, or if you are told to sweep, swab, wax, and buff the deck, you are not expected to look your best. You can, however, start that way in the morning.

Appearance does not necessarily affect your professional performance, but it does indicate your attitude and your pride to the customer. Your

appearance is just as important to the customer as the appearance of your desk and the general appearance of your office.

As for the appearance of your office, a neat, efficient-looking, businesslike desk and working space, such as the office of the PN depicted in figure 1-6, imply that the people working in this office are efficient and businesslike. Have you heard the expression that "A messy desk is a working desk"? This is not true! The appearance of a messy desk does not mean that an individual is working any harder than the person who has a neat desk. A messy desk or a messy office shows total disregard for its appearance and a lack of concern and professionalism on the part of the person or persons who occupy it. A messy desk or office does not impress customers; in fact, it turns them off.

How do you maintain your desk? If you display a disregard for neatness, the customer will pick up on this characteristic.

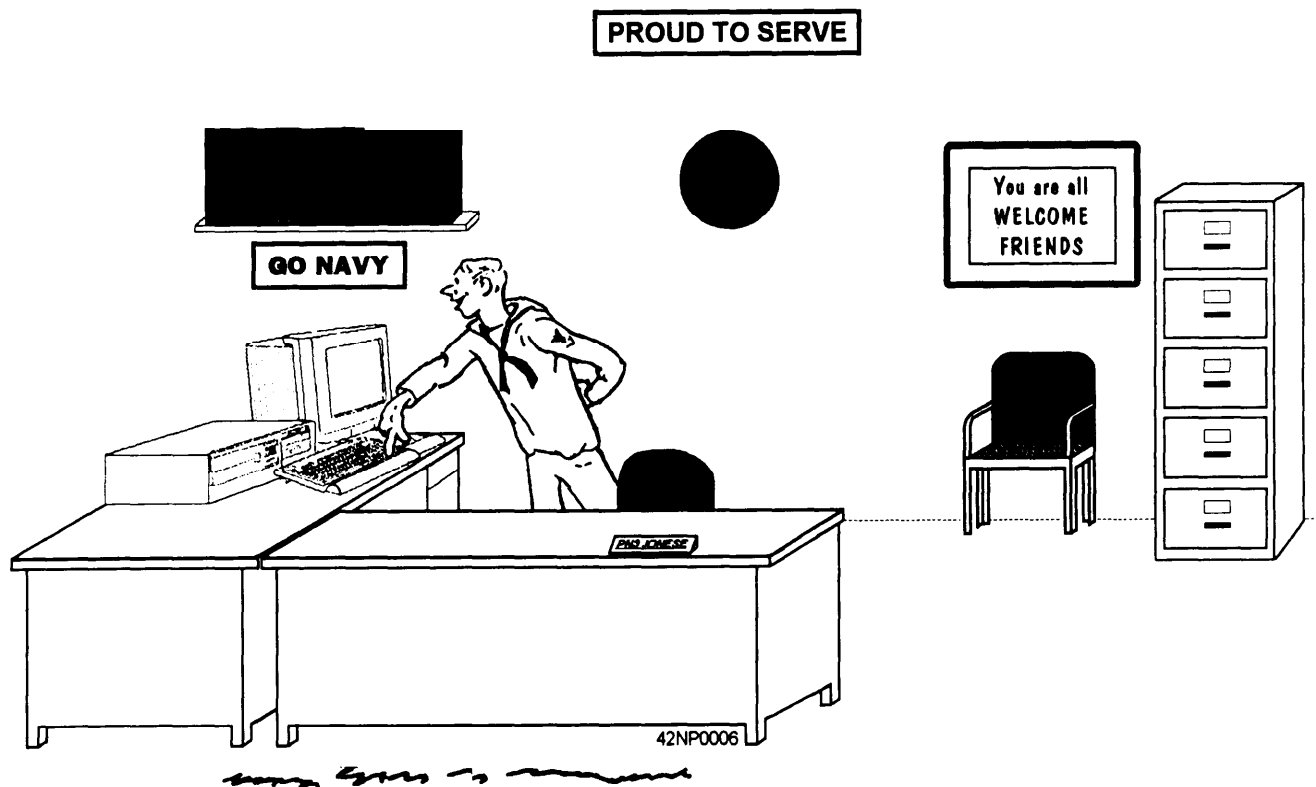


Figure 1-6.—A PN projecting a neat and clean appearance and office.

If your appearance or the appearance of your office tells the customer that you do not care about yourself or your office, then the customer has a legitimate reason for believing that the service you provide will show the same lack of concern. You should be a neat and organized individual !

Your Attitude as Customer Service Representative

We discussed attitude earlier, and it is so important in providing good customer service that we must reemphasize it once again.

The impression being formed by the customer is also the result of other evidence. The customer forms a mental picture of you from the messages you unconsciously communicate—what kind of person you are and how you view your job, your rating, the Navy, the customer, and the customer's problem. These messages consist of positive or negative attitudes such as the following.

<u>NEGATIVE ATTITUDES</u>	<u>POSITIVE ATTITUDES</u>
"I wish I could get out of this rat race."	"I perform an important function by providing needed services."
"They treat me like a servant."	"I know we have a lot of work to do, but I am a member of the same team and I must do my fair share."
"I'm tired of this little dinky job."	"This routine job is boring at times, nevertheless it is an important job and I will do it to the best of my ability."
"These dumb kids don't know what they want,"	"Because of their inexperience, these young customers rely on me for assistance."
"Don't bother me!"	"May I be of assistance to you?"

The customer will soon know how you feel, and you will not have to express your feelings in words. Just as in figure 1-7, your attitude will speak for itself. Your attitude toward your customers is closely related to your attitude toward your job. Your customers will

quickly sense your attitude from your speech and the manner in which you conduct yourself.

What is your attitude toward your rating or your present duties? What would be the result if no one else were doing your job? Regardless of how you answered these questions, you have certainly communicated your attitude to your customers.

If you have a negative attitude toward your job, have you stopped to think and ask yourself why? It is not unusual for a person to feel that an assignment is a treadmill at times, but something can be done about it. Is the job that you have not enough to keep you busy? Do you have too much time on your hands? If this is the case, this gives you an opportunity to study for advancement, or prepare yourself for a more challenging position in your office.

Even with today's manpower shortages, there is even a greater shortage of people who are willing to do more than just the bare minimum. Be a dedicated individual and do not just do what is expected of you. You should do more! Your dedication and your efforts will eventually be recognized in the form of good evaluations, letters of appreciation, and other awards. You will also feel a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction for doing more than just your share.

Individuals in positions of authority do recognize hardworking and dedicated individuals. You may not believe that because you are probably saying to yourself, "I have worked very hard and consider myself one of the more dedicated PNs in the office, and I have yet to receive any recognition." But you must be patient because your supervisors will eventually recognize your efforts. The Navy appreciates your hard work and dedication. Keep up the good work!

ANALYZING THE CUSTOMER

We have been analyzing your actions as the customer service representative so that you may see some reasons, within yourself, why you may not be providing as good a service as you are expected to do. To do this, we have assumed that the customer was in a good mood, had trust in your ability, and was willing to accept your solution. This is not always the case.

There are several factors that often stand between you and the customer. They can complicate the customer's problem and your efforts to provide a solution. In the following paragraphs, we will take a look at some of these barriers.

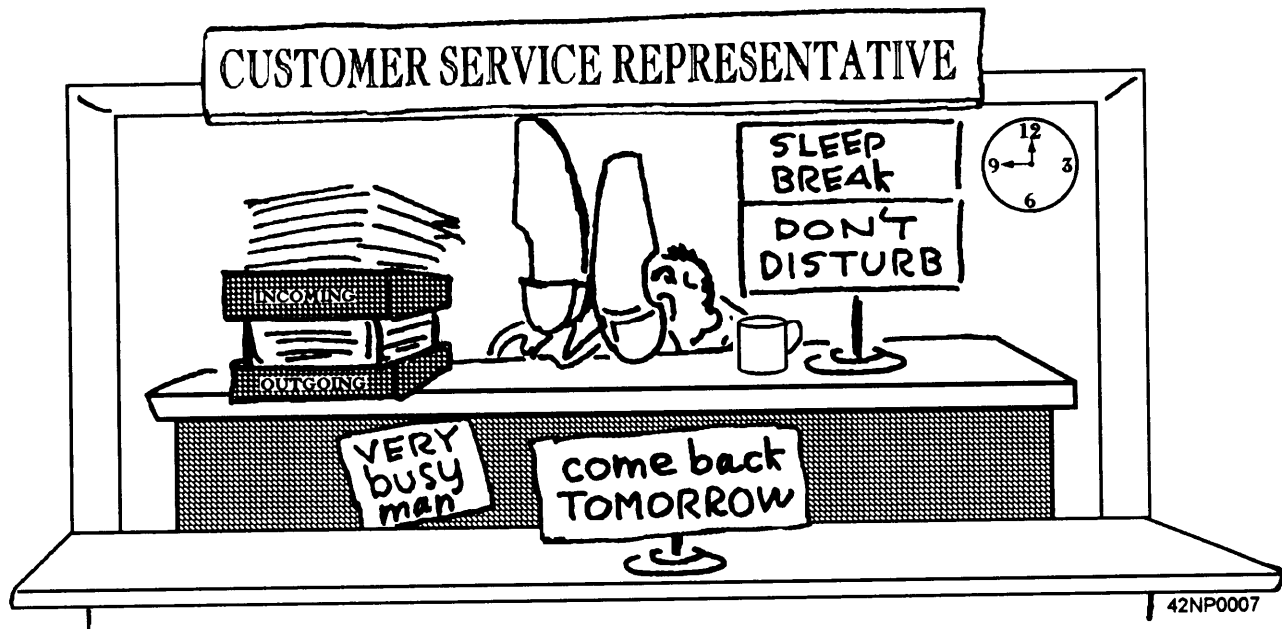


Figure 1-7.—Beware of your attitude—the customer knows what you are feeling.

State of Mind

Regardless of the nature or seriousness of the customer's problem, certain negative factors may serve to complicate it. The customer may exhibit the following behaviors:

- Be angry, worried, or frustrated
- Lack confidence in your abilities
- Be unwilling to accept anything less than the desired solution to a problem

However, if you can recognize these factors and make appropriate allowances for them, you may avoid further complicating the customer's problem.

The customer who is emotionally upset (angry, worried, or frustrated) may have difficulty in stating a problem accurately or completely. Significant information may be omitted; opinions may be confused with facts; or there may be a feeling that the information you are requesting is too personal. Usually, it will help if you can first determine the cause and target of the customer's emotional upset. What caused the anger? To whom is it directed? You may be able to sort out this information by letting the customer "unload," as depicted in figure 1-8. Leading questions should fill any blank spots.

The old adage, "The customer is always right," is not true in all situations. Personal abuse is not a "right"

of the customer. But, the customer who is allowed to "blow off steam" (within reason) may then become apologetic and ready to accept your help.

When you are faced with an upset customer, remember that your purpose is to serve that customer's needs. Any other response on your part that may cause the customer to become more irritated is not appropriate. Try to calm the customer and maintain your self-composure. If you start shouting back



Figure 1-8.—Dealing with an angry customer.

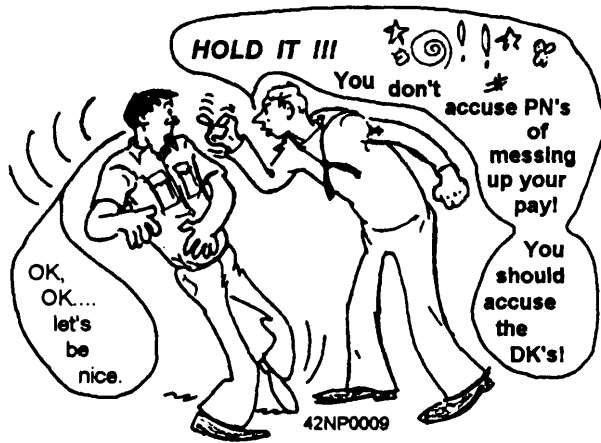


Figure 1-9.—An angry customer and an angry PN will produce a bigger problem.

because the customer has upset you, as shown in figure 1-9, you will not be able to provide the service that the customer needs. If you feel that the customer has crossed the boundaries and is being verbally abusive to you, excuse yourself and bring the problem to the attention of your supervisor. Your supervisor has more experience in dealing with angry or irritated customers and will take whatever action is necessary to resolve the customer's problem.

A calm, confident manner, as shown by the PN in figure 1-10, is the best approach. When you do not respond with anger or rudeness to a customer's emotional outburst, you have taken the first step

toward solving the customer's problem, whatever its nature.

The Specific Problem

Frequently, a customer's problem will be stated in terms of the result desired. It is then up to you to identify the nature or cause of the problem and provide a satisfactory solution. It is obvious that you do not have to know all the answers. However, you must be familiar with all areas of the PN rating in order to identify specific problems and know where to find specific answers. You should always display genuine concern and professional competence as you analyze the customer's problem.

Complicated Problems

Most of the customers will have rather routine, easily identifiable problems. These problems will not present any great difficulty. However, there are exceptions. To resolve a complicated problem, both the customer and you, the PN, must have a mutual desire to achieve results and take whatever appropriate action is necessary to solve the problem. The problems you encounter that are beyond your control because of your lack of experience must be brought to the attention of a more knowledgeable individual, such as your supervisor.

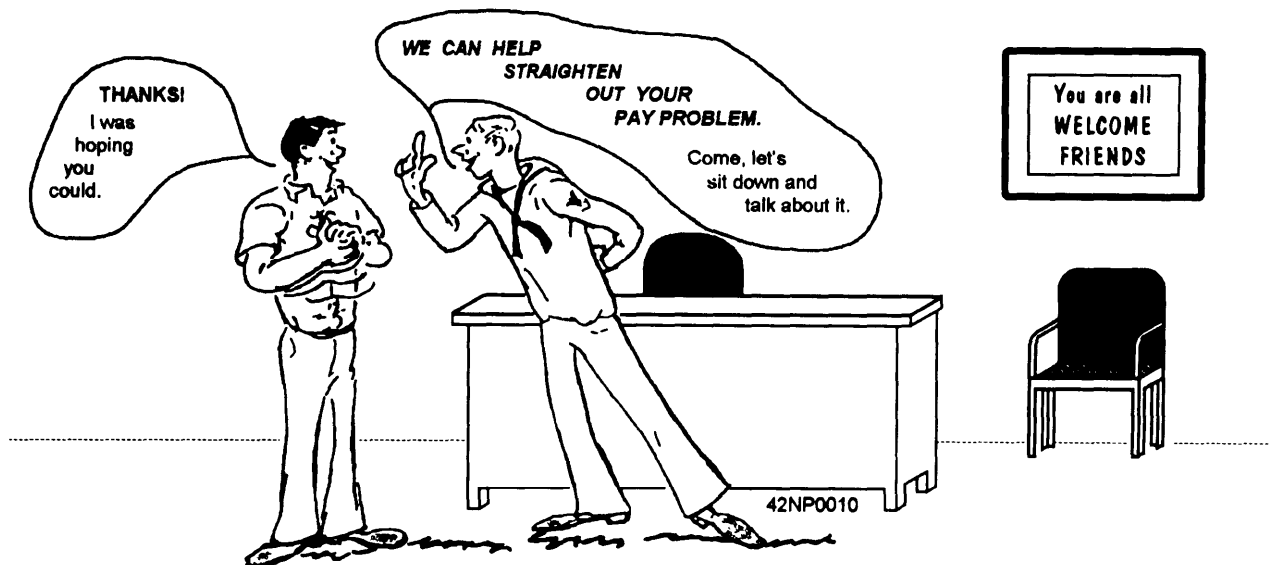


Figure 1-10.—The results of a calm, confident attitude.

Your Response

Earlier we discussed your attitudes toward customers, but we were thinking about customers in general. It is not difficult to be pleasant when you are dealing with pleasant people. It may become more difficult when the person is unpleasant.

Occasionally, you will have a customer who just seems to rub people the wrong way. No matter how hard you try, you cannot remain pleasant or friendly because of the customer's attitude or manner of speaking. In this situation, it is usually best to keep the contact as impersonal as possible. Ignore the person's manner and attitude and concentrate on the problem. It will be difficult, but it can be done.

Your performance will be viewed by the customer, your co-workers, and your supervisor. If you are to do your best work, as rated by them, you must maintain your self-control. When patience runs out and tempers flare, your ability to think and act properly is greatly reduced. Be a professional customer service representative and think before you act !

PITFALLS TO AVOID IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

In the previous section we discussed why a good attitude is important to customer satisfaction. We will now talk about some specific mistakes PN's can make in their handling of customer needs. For the most part, these mistakes will tend to result from any attitudes you project toward the customer, the customer's problem, the Navy, your job, or yourself.

LEAPING TO CONCLUSIONS

Leaping to a conclusion means that, in your opinion, you already possess sufficient facts upon which to base your judgment. As a result, you end up ignoring additional information provided by the customer. This tendency is often caused by a lack of concern for the customer and the desire to end the contact as quickly as possible. It may also occur because you normally have a better knowledge of your field than does the customer, and you may assume that you know the customer's need before it is completely expressed.

In routine situations, you may be able to second-guess your customers' needs. This practice can even save time. Under other conditions, however, it can lead to misunderstanding. When you make this

assumption, you quit listening and begin to form your response to the customer. As a result, you may miss an important part of the problem and be unable to provide correct service because of your misunderstanding.

If a customer has a vague idea as to the nature of a problem, you should not jump to conclusions. This does not help the customer. You should use tactful, skillful questioning to properly identify what the customer is trying to tell you.

Any decision that affects the customer must be made carefully—whether it is made by you or by the customer. It is your responsibility to make sure all the facts are known before the decision is made. You have surely heard the excuse, "But he told me. . . ." The customer may be misled by rumor or half-truths, and you may not be able to do anything to correct the misconception. "Look before you leap" is good advice, but you must carry it a step further—"Make sure the customer looks before you let him or her leap." It is your responsibility as a PN to listen carefully to the customer before you reach any conclusions. It is also your responsibility to give out correct information. Always find out the correct answer from the sources available. It is very frustrating to customers when they receive incorrect information. The customers do not like it, and your supervisors will not like it either because it will reflect on them. If you give out bad information, customers may blame your errors on your lack of training. Remember also that your supervisor will not like to appear incompetent.

PERSONAL REACTIONS

Occasionally, you may experience an adverse reaction to a customer—to his or her appearance, speech, or attitude. Because of your reaction, you may not be able to provide the quality of service that the customer needs or deserves. Most often, the cause of your adverse reaction will be the customer's attitude. When the customer is overbearing, cynical, or has a smart mouth, it may be difficult for you to maintain a professional manner. Nevertheless, you must remain professional. Customers who have bad attitudes are also individuals who deserve the same courtesy and respect as nice and courteous individuals.

One experience that may be difficult for you, the PN, is to try to help a customer who expresses an extreme dislike for the Navy. Do not be surprised if this customer's attitude begins to provoke a negative reaction from you. This is sometimes done unconsciously. You may not think much about your

reaction at the time, but if you are not aware of your own feelings, you may fail to provide the best service to this person. You may not really like this person, but your awareness of your own feelings can allow you to use this experience to improve your own face-to-face skills and to make sure your performance as a PN is not adversely affected by this customer's negative attitude.

You must also be aware of your feelings regarding a previous episode in which you had to deal with a difficult customer. You can be sure you will remember the customer who gave you a rough time on a previous visit. Do not let this memory affect your response when you are called upon again to serve this customer. Do not be surprised that you may feel like saying, "Sure I'll help you. I'll help you jump over the side." But, do not say it! Showing your feelings may give you some temporary gratification, but it will not solve your problems with this customer and it will have an adverse effect on your performance.

Some personal reactions you may experience will not be that strong. In fact, they may be very mild and will perhaps be caused by unconcern or lack of interest. Unfortunately, these attitudes can be just as deadly to customer satisfaction. Everyone possesses a feeling of self-worth. If you, the PN, should deny this by showing a lack of concern or interest, the customer may show the same attitude toward the Navy and its representatives as a defense.

STEREOTYPING

Stereotyping is forming a standardized oversimplified mental picture of members of a group. Stereotyping involves a fixed or general pattern that is attributed to the members of a particular group—disregarding individual, distinguishing qualities or characteristics. In stereotyping, we form mental pictures of people, things, and events according to the classification or group in which we feel they belong.

Consciously or unconsciously, we may have gone to a lot of effort to build up these stereotypes in our minds to make it easier to classify people. Some of these stereotypes may carry such labels as race, nationality, sex, religion, length of hair, and many others. Stereotyping eliminates the need for us to know the person as an individual. How convenient it is to have these ready-made niches in which we can place the person and thereby "know all about them." But what an injustice this is! This implies that the person

is no different from anybody else in the same group or category. This in itself is bad enough, but it is even more offensive when that person is placed in a category that we regard as inferior, and we, in turn, reflect this opinion in our attitude toward the customer.

Study figure 1-11. Notice how this figure points out the difference between a mental picture that is a valid aid to communications (second picture) and one that is an unwarranted stereotype (third picture). Mental pictures are important because they are a quick way of conveying messages, but you must be sure they really fit the individual before you apply them. Therefore, knowing that stereotyping individuals is not consistent with the Navy's expectations, you should not stereotype individuals.

LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Communication requires more than just talking. One person alone cannot communicate. Communication involves a sender, a receiver, and a message that is understood by both individuals. The sender must first be able to select the words or visual signals that accurately cover the desired meaning and then make sure the message is fully understood by the receiver. However, all responsibility does not rest on the sender; the receiver must listen to what is being said. When interference (lack of understanding or distractions) garbles the message, the receiver should ask the sender to repeat the message or provide an explanation.

Misunderstanding information may be worse than receiving no information at all. Not understanding something can result in disappointment, frustration, a missed opportunity, or an improper action by the receiver. As a PN, you must be especially aware of this pitfall.

You will sometimes feel that you can almost see the earplugs in a customer's ears. What you are saying is just not getting through. You may tend to shrug it off and think, "I did my part. It's not my fault the customer wouldn't listen." Are you sure that you did your part? We do not think so. This customer came to you for information or advice and did not receive it. Any one of several causes, such as the following situations, could have interfered with your message:

- The customer was vague about the particulars of the problem.
- You used unfamiliar terms or slang.

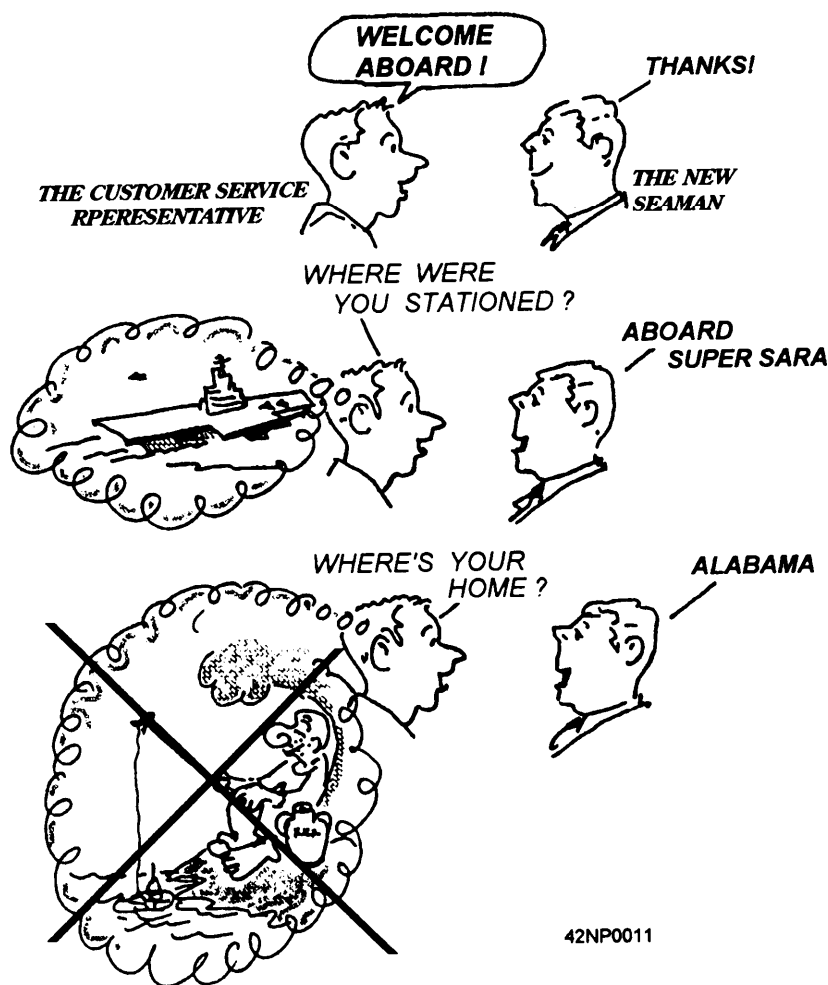


Figure 1-11.—Stereotyping individuals is not consistent with the Navy's expectations.

- Because you understood the subject so well yourself, you did not make your explanation as thorough as you should have.
- Your attitude implied that the customer or his or her problem was not important.
- Other problems were bothering the customer.
- The customer felt rushed.
- You failed to make sure the customer had understood.

Keep in mind that if the customer has a question and only you, a PN, can provide the answer because the customer's record is maintained by your office, that customer can only obtain the information from you.

There are several types of language barriers that interfere with effective communications. Some are

cultural, some are physical, some are habit, and some are just intended to confuse you. The barrier may exist because of the customer, you, or both.

The first two barriers—cultural and physical—are the most difficult for the speaker to overcome. Persons, for whom English is a second language, often have difficulty with pronunciation, meaning, and sentence structure. English is considered to be one of the most difficult languages to learn (words that sound alike have completely different spellings and meanings and words with similar spelling are pronounced differently). You cannot change the English language, but there are ways you can help your customer to overcome this barrier. First, you must listen very carefully to what the customer is saying. The best way to do this is by being honestly concerned. Next, be absolutely sure you know the nature of the need or problem. Then, carefully phrase your questions so that you use relatively simple words and ask only one thing at a time. By first determining the nature of the

problem, you can then gain additional information by asking questions.

The customer who has difficulty speaking English may also have trouble understanding it. When it is apparent that the customer is having difficulty understanding, you should speak more distinctly and, in most cases, more slowly. You can usually tell by the customer's expression whether or not you are being understood.

Speech impediments, such as stuttering or lisping, can also cause misunderstanding. In cases such as these, your problem will be understanding the speaker's words rather than the speaker's choice of words.

We have been speaking of language barriers as though they exist only on the part of the customer. This is not always the case. Language barriers also exist with customer service representatives. If you have a language barrier, your first step is to be aware of it. Your next step is to make a conscious effort either to eliminate it or to compensate for it. To compensate for a language problem, try to speak slowly and give the listener time to follow and interpret what you are saying. Be sure to ask questions and encourage your customer to do the same.

Some speech patterns that interfere with understanding are not impediments but just habits. Some of these speech habits are slurred pronunciation, running words together, speaking too fast, an exaggerated drawl or brogue, and profanity. Again, these are not physical impediments or intentional barriers; they are just habits. You should analyze your own speech patterns and determine whether or not you need to improve your manner of speaking. It is possible that you may have one or more of these habits. Normally, we do not listen to our own speech, but you can obtain a reasonably accurate sample of your speaking voice if you record an informal conversation and then listen to it carefully. Speech habits are not too hard to change, but you must first be aware of the habits you need to change.

Personal reactions were discussed in a previous section, but speech habits were not listed as a cause of an adverse reaction. In some instances, speech habits may cause negative reactions. You may show an adverse reaction to the person who has difficulty speaking or understanding English, and that person may react to your inability to communicate. The person with a language or speaking problem is frequently sensitive about that problem and will

interpret any exaggerated manner of speaking on your part as an attempt to demean. But, as with other factors affecting customer relations, your positive attitude is the most effective way to overcome the language barrier.

The use of words reflecting prejudice and bigotry is a major roadblock in effective communications. Prejudice and bigotry stem from ignorance, fear, and superstitions of the people who started them, and their continued use today reflects the same characteristics in the users.

It is acknowledged that everyone has prejudices of some kind. They are a part of our emotional character, but they are preconceived opinions—a prejudgment of a person—based on insufficient evidence. Prejudices are directly opposed to our constitutional concept of justice—a person is presumed innocent until judged guilty.

It takes time and effort to root out prejudices, but the results are well worth it. In the meantime, make a constant, conscious effort not to use words that create resentment and anger. Remember that there is no room for prejudice and bigotry in our Navy. Individuals who fit in this category must change their outlook on life. Otherwise, they will continue to be considered “dragging anchors.”

The final barrier is most often set up by you, the PN, through the use of slang, technical terms, and acronyms that may confuse the customer. Although you will routinely use these terms and acronyms among your co-workers, your co-workers are already familiar with this language. You should remember that these words or expressions are not appropriate when your customers may not be familiar with them. If you must use technical terms, you must explain what they are as you refer to them in your conversation.

Remember that customers from other ratings are not as well informed about your rating and work as you are. Therefore, you must remember to speak to your customers in terms that they can understand. Periodically ask the customer if he or she understands. If the customer does not understand, ask your customer to tell you what he or she does not understand and repeat yourself in simpler terms, if appropriate.

RESPONDING IN KIND

You must respond to the moods of others appropriately. If the customer is friendly, you are more likely to be friendly. If the customer is angry, you may

find yourself becoming cautious and defensive. If the customer is anxious or worried, you may react by becoming vague and noncommittal. If the customer displays an impersonal attitude, you may do the same. In these situations, you have permitted the customer to set the mood for your contact. Instead of taking the initiative, or acting, you have reacted. Why? It is just human nature and you, the PN, must be aware of this.

The tendency to remain neutral and then respond to the customer's mood is a defensive measure. We tend to wait for other people to reveal their attitudes before we commit ourselves. That way, we do not waste any of our friendliness or good humor on someone not worthy of it. We hesitate to make the first move for fear that the other person will reject the move by responding negatively or not at all. The best time to influence the customer's mood is when you first acknowledge his or her presence. In this way, you are taking control of the situation and providing the best possible conditions under which you can help this person.

Hostility and anxiety will reduce the customer's ability to see a problem fully, to express it correctly, and to accept the solution objectively. If you respond with the same mood, these negative emotions escalate and your ability to deal with the problem is compromised. When the customer is emotionally upset, there are two problems: (1) the emotion and (2) the need that aroused it. Remember, there is nothing to be gained by responding in kind to the customer's mood. In fact, such a response will probably make matters worse. You should try to calm the customer by being calm yourself and show the customer by your actions that you are ready, willing, and able to handle the problem.

AMIALE RUNAROUND

The emphasis on being friendly to the customer is a means to an end—not an end in itself. You must also provide good customer service. You do not have the choice of providing either the friendly atmosphere or the good service—you must provide both.

When a friendly, helpful atmosphere is encountered at the contact point, the customer is put at ease and may be able to state the problem more accurately. Then you are expected to take constructive action to help the customer correct his or her problem. But, some customer service representatives think that their job is to keep the customers smiling and get rid of them as soon as possible. True, the customer goes

away happy, but the happy attitude will not last. Sooner or later, that customer will have to return because nothing was done about the problem. You can bet this customer will not be in a good frame of mind.

In helping people, you will discover that a considerable amount of time and effort is required to deal with some customers' problems or needs. In such instances, you may decide that it will be easier for you if you convince the customer that no action is really necessary. But this response will have an even worse effect than denying the service to the customer because you are, in fact, denying the reality of the customer's problem. If a customer requests (and is entitled to) a service, it is your responsibility to provide it. When you can say to a customer, "It is all taken care of," you are promising that person that all necessary actions have been completed. This is a good response if it is the truth. If it is not, you have done a disservice—not a service—to your customer, your office, your rating, and the Navy. Have you ever said to a customer, "Yes, everything is taken care of" when in fact it was not? If so, you should realize that this is a bad way of doing business. Remember, you should be both tactful and truthful when you deal with your customers.

PROMISE THE CUSTOMER ANYTHING

This type of service is similar to giving your poor customer the amiable runaround we just discussed. Promising the customer anything may be a method you choose to "Keep 'em smiling," but they will not be smiling long. Even you, a member of a customer service rating, have encountered a customer service representative who agreed with every statement you made, sympathized with you, promised you everything you wanted, and essentially did nothing. This sometimes develops as a result of a short-timer's attitude in which the representative may think, "Sure, I'll promise you whatever you want to hear just to get rid of you. I'll be long gone when you come back to find out why nothing has been done." This type of response may leave the customer temporarily satisfied, but it has only postponed the problem and may have complicated it because of loss of time. It is also a lousy way to do business.

As human beings, we tend to hear what we want to hear. This often leads us to expect or hope for results that are based on misunderstanding, misinterpretation of fact, rumor, or even wishful thinking. Sometimes, the results your customer wants may be impossible, or at least very difficult, for you to deliver. Be alert! This will usually tell you how the customer wants it

answered. You must decide how you will answer. Examine the following choices:

- You can give the customer the answer he or she wants to hear even though you know that it is not completely accurate. (This will certainly guarantee disappointment to the customer later on and degrade your own professional competence.)
- You can make some vague statements and let the customer interpret them as he or she likes. (This may let you off the hook because you really did not give the customer wrong information. In fact, you really did not give your customer much of anything.)
- You can give the customer the correct information or interpretation now. (This, of course, may cause some grumbling because it may not be the answer the customer wants to hear.) It will, however, be the truth and, in the long run, your customer will understand and appreciate being told the truth.

The bottom line is “anything less than the best information you can offer is unfair to the customer.” A half-truth may be just as misleading and damaging as an outright lie. Future plans may be based on your “bum dope,” and the morale, as well as the finances, of the customer may suffer because of it.

We have emphasized time and time again that if you do not have the answer to a customer’s question, find out who does. Just because you ask another person about an answer does not mean that you are any less competent. On the other hand, it shows your concern for obtaining correct information. Remember that you are not expected to have all the answers, but you are expected to know where to find them.

The friendly attitude displayed by a customer service representative who tells half-truths or misleads customers is not friendliness at all. It is nothing more than a cover-up for the real attitude of unconcern.

GOING BEYOND YOUR REALM

If you seldom make a mistake, you may find it difficult to understand why other people frequently make more mistakes. Mistakes can result from many different situations. For example, heavy workloads, inexperienced personnel, unfamiliar situations, and carelessness can all contribute to the likelihood of errors. Errors may disappear, but they do not go away. The problem with all errors is that they must be

corrected—often at some later date, at a different command, or by someone else.

When you have to correct an error that someone else made, you will be tempted to “sound off” about the person who made the mistake. But whether or not you express your feeling, you must spend the same amount of effort correcting the error. It is proper to tell your customer that a mistake was made and explain the conditions—where and when—the error was made. Although you may feel embarrassed to explain to your customer that a mistake was made by your office, you nevertheless must do this as soon as the problem is identified. Appropriate steps must be taken to correct the problem immediately. If the problem was made by another office, correct it promptly. In both cases, there is no need to “cry over spilled milk.” Just correct the problem.

Another area in which we sometimes overstep our bounds is expressing criticism or disapproval of official Navy policy, command policy, and divisional procedures and instructions. You do not have to agree with all of them. In fact, discussing them among your co-workers can have positive results—a change in procedures, a better flow of information, a better understanding of policy, or the improved ability to help the customer. Expressing your adverse opinion about them to the customer, however, serves no good purpose.

When a customer requests something that must be denied because of current policy or regulations, frustration and resentment are natural reactions. If you express your disapproval or criticism of this policy or regulation, it only serves to increase the feeling of resentment or frustration in the customer. You have not helped. You have just made it harder for the customer to accept the inevitable answer. On the other hand, if you know the policy is a temporary matter, or if you have reason to believe a change is contemplated, it is permissible—in fact, it is desirable—for you to explain this so that the customer may renew the request later.

You may have some customers whose problems are only imaginary. They want to complain about their petty officers, division officers, duty assignments, working conditions, or the holes in their pants. In these situations, you must maintain a very careful balance. You should not refuse to hear them out. There should be a point, however, when you must politely tell them that you wish you could stay there and listen, but that you have some important matters to attend to.

APATHY

Look at figure 1-12. Do you see how apathy on your part can present a very discouraging prospect to your customer? There is little for a customer to do except hope when faced by someone who just does not want to be bothered. If you reflect apathy or unconcern when you respond to a customer's needs with a shrug of your shoulders or convey the message, "Who cares?" "What's your hurry?" or "What's the difference?" by your attitude, we guarantee you will provoke a negative reaction on the part of your customer.

You must keep in mind that, no matter how simple or unimportant you consider a request, the customer depends on you to provide a service. There is no provision for customers to provide their own services, even if they were able to, and there is no place else for them to go for the service. Sure, it requires a little effort on your part to answer a question or look up a reference, but that extra effort or interest is a mark of good service.

Apathy is the result of a very negative attitude you have formed toward life in general or toward your job or duty assignment. Apathy is difficult to overcome because an apathetic person has already given up. A person may become apathetic because of the following reasons:

- Sees no purpose to the job
- Has been doing the same job too long

- Sees no possibility for advancement or increased responsibility
- Is not challenged by responsibility
- Has decided against a Navy career and is just waiting for his or her enlistment to end by not being a productive member

Such a person is coasting down a dangerous path. Anyone who is in this position and does nothing to correct it is shortchanging himself or herself as well as the customer and the Navy. As a PN, you cannot afford to allow apathy to take hold of your life and your job. You can fight and conquer apathy. Do your job as a PN and do it well!

Most jobs, in or out of the Navy, involve many hours of routine work for each challenging, interesting period of work that occurs. Quite often, when we become dissatisfied with the job we have and long for another more interesting one, it is because we are looking only at the routine aspects of our jobs. The best defense against boredom in a routine job is to develop a challenge within ourselves. If the job does not challenge you, then you set the challenge. Set realistic and attainable goals. Set goals that are worthwhile—and meet them.

Even if your job is nothing more than filing correspondence in service records or typing page 4 entries, you can be the best at what you do in the office—until you can prepare yourself for and be

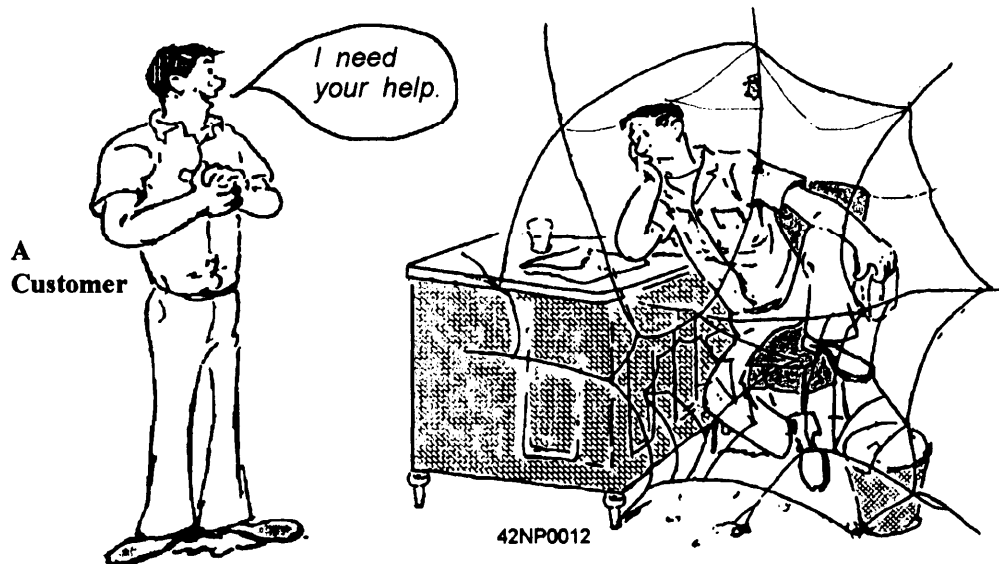


Figure 1-12.—Apathy is a deadly sin.

assigned to a job with greater responsibility where you will find more satisfaction.

IT'S THE CUSTOMER'S TIME TOO

“What’s your hurry? You are not going anywhere!” This line, or variations of it, is heard often by customers. The implication is that time is a factor only for the customer service representative and never for the customer. Ordinarily, customers should be helped without having to wait an undue amount of time. There will be times when you are snowed under, but the customer can usually see this and will understand.

Several methods, such as appointments, special counter hours, or specifically designating an individual to handle certain problems or issues, can be used to speed up service and reduce waiting time. Any system that serves this purpose is valid for routine visits, but it should also be flexible enough to provide for emergency situations. Remember: any system that is used to speed up service and reduce waiting time must accomplish these goals. It must never be used as a device for limiting service.

TOO BUSY

It is Friday afternoon. Before Chief John Doe departs the ship, he tasked PN3 Door with completing some filing that has not been done in 5 days. Also, because PN3 Door does not have duty, the chief has asked him to make some page 4 entries before leaving for the weekend. Before leaving, the chief informs PN3 Door that he will be back on Sunday morning to take care of some important matters in preparation for the ship’s underway period that will start on Monday morning. Just as PN3 Door is starting to make the page 4 entries, BMSN Christmas shows up asking for help. PN3 Door stops for a minute and reluctantly (and somewhat rudely) asks BMSN Christmas what he needs. BMSN Christmas tells PN3 Door that there is a chance that he may not be able to get under way with the ship on Monday morning because his wife, who is in the local Navy hospital, is having medical complications associated with an illness. The BMSN asks PN3 Door what he has to do to inform the commanding officer about his problem. PN3 Door tells him that he does not know and asks the BMSN to come back on Sunday and talk with the chief. PN3 Door says nothing more, nor does he acknowledge that the BMSN is still standing there. PN3 Door just continues to make the few remaining page 4 entries he

needs to make. BMSN Christmas leaves the office very angry, frustrated, and disappointed because he was not helped by the PN3. Because PN3 Door, the only PN on board was not able to help, BMSN Christmas will have to leave his wife at the hospital on Sunday to comeback to the ship and talk with the chief.

Well, PN3 Door (that liberty hound) certainly looked very busy making the page 4 entries and was in such a hurry to go on liberty that he did not take care of BMSN Christmas’s problem. Of course, taking care of BMSN Christmas was PN3 Door’s responsibility.

Was this appropriate conduct? Certainly not! In this case, PN3 Door should have contacted the command duty officer or even called the chief at home. But no, he decided that his liberty was more important than taking care of the BMSN’s problem.

Have you ever appeared to be too busy to take care of your shipmates? It is very possible that you have. How would you feel if you were the one who needed help and the person behind the counter was in such a hurry to go on liberty that he or she did not take care of your problem?

As a PN, you should understand that helping your shipmates is your most important job. Your shipmates depend on you. You should do everything in your power to provide them with the best customer service possible.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have tried to acquaint you with the general requirements of the PN rating. We have mostly described how important it is for you to provide good customer service to all individuals. We stressed that if you have a good attitude, pride in your job and in yourself, these qualities will contribute to your ability to provide good customer service. Remember, if you are providing good customer service right now, the Navy appreciates it and thanks you for your efforts. Remember also, that there is always room for improvement. The most important thing you should get out of this chapter is that you should put yourself in the customer’s shoes. Ask yourself, “How do I want to be treated?” In answering this question, you will most likely say, “Well, I always want to be treated with courtesy and respect.” You see, that is just how all customers want to be treated—with courtesy and respect. You should always treat customers the way you want to be treated.